

Media Release



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Cap on basin buybacks a win for on-farm irrigation efficiency: Australian Dairy Farmers

For immediate release

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Australian Dairy Farmers (ADF) has welcomed the Federal Government's confirmation that it will cap Murray Darling Basin buybacks at 1500 gigalitres (GL).

The cap, which is a Coalition pre-election commitment, was confirmed by the Parliamentary Secretary for the Environment, Senator Simon Birmingham, in an interview with The Australian newspaper.

President of ADF, Noel Campbell, welcomed the news and said it would be reassuring for farmers and farming communities across the Murray Darling Basin.

"ADF welcomes the government's confirmation that it will implement its pre-election commitment to cap buybacks at 1500GL," Mr Campbell said.

"We have said consistently that buybacks are only a small part of the solution, and that there needed to be a greater focus on upgrading inefficient irrigation infrastructure.

"By focusing on upgrading infrastructure, we can return more water to the Murray Darling system without burdening irrigators at the same time.

"A report commissioned by Dairy Australia (DA) "*Cost Benefit Analysis of Farm Irrigation Modernisation*", which was released earlier this year, found that farm upgrades cost the Government around \$3,700 a megalitre (ML) of water savings for the environment, while delivering gross productivity gains to farmers worth an average \$9,800/ML of water savings.

"Building on this, increased farm production generated additional regional economic activity worth \$6,200/ML."

Mr Campbell said ADF was pleased the Federal Government had committed to phasing in the buybacks over six years, rather than the original plan of four, and that spending under the Murray Darling Basin Plan (MDBP) will be focused on infrastructure projects that deliver improvements in water efficiency.

"These are common sense steps by the government that will reassure farmers and stakeholders that the MDBP will be implemented in a manner that is both mindful of, and sensitive to, the needs of agricultural industry," he said.

"We look forward to continuing to work constructively with the government and relevant stakeholders in achieving the best possible outcome for the Basin."

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